

Office of the Ombudsman for the
Institutionalized Elderly
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Chris Christie
Governor



Kim Guadagno
Lt. Governor



James McCracken
Ombudsman

NJ Governor Signs Resident Bill of Rights

On October 17, 2013, Governor Christie signed into law a [bill of rights](#) for independent residents living in Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs). The bipartisan legislation, bills S2052 / A3132, will ensure that residents of independent living sections of CCRCs have an active role in decisions that impact their daily lives. It clarifies that a resident has the right to express a complaint without fear of interference, discharge or reprisal and has the right to contact the New Jersey Long-Term Care Ombudsman (known in the state as the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly). It also enumerates certain legal, medical and financial rights. New residents will receive a written copy of the resident's rights prior to the execution of a continuing care residency agreement and a statement of resident's rights entitled "Bill of Rights for Continuing Care Retirement Community Residents in Independent Living" must be posted in a conspicuous place and distributed to all residents. The Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs may levy and collect penalties in the amount of not less than \$250, and not more than \$50,000, for each violation of the act. The act shall take effect May 1, 2014.

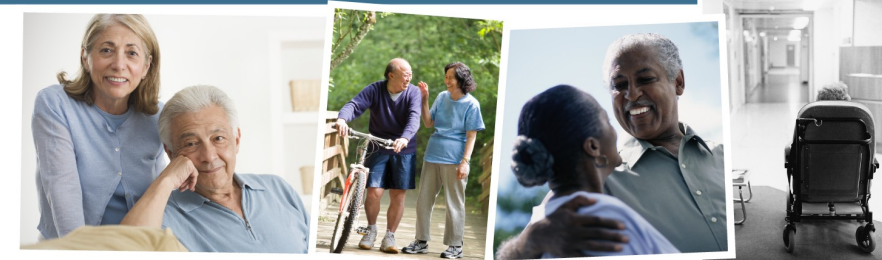
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Guidance. Support. Advocacy.



December 2013 | Volume 2, Issue 2

The Beacon

News from New Jersey's Long-Term Care Advocate

Seasons Greetings

Dear Friends!

This edition of The Beacon showcases some of the new and exciting outreach activities undertaken by OOIE staff during the last several months. While the main work of the Office continues to be direct advocacy for people living in long-term care settings, we have also dramatically increased our presence in the community over the last three years.

Specifically, we continue to promote our Volunteer Advocate Program in order to reach our goal of having at least one advocate assigned to every Skilled Nursing Facility in the state. In addition, our I Choose Home NJ/Money Follows the Person program is now fully staffed. The sole focus of this federally-funded program is to inform SNF staff, residents and their families about the availability of home- and community-based services that may make it possible for some SNF residents to return home.

As a result of these outreach activities, the ICHNJ team has identified about 130 individuals who have expressed a desire to transition back into the community. Many of these people have either already moved or are awaiting a community placement. If they are not eligible for ICHNJ, every effort is made to link them to an appropriate program to meet their needs.

Also as a result of our expanded outreach activities, we have seen an increase in the number of people participating in the OOIE Volunteer Advocate program. In mid-2011, the Volunteer Advocate Program had about 150 active volunteers. Today, the program has 210 volunteers with an additional 40 in the pipeline currently being trained and readied for placement in early 2014.

Finally, I am proud of the work my staff has done to broaden our outreach to include hands-on assistance to citizens in need in the City of Trenton, where the OOIE is headquartered. Taking our lead from Governor Chris Christie's highly successful "Season of Service" campaign, OOIE staff recently lent a hand at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and Crisis Ministry food pantry.

These activities, coupled with the important work we do every day, make me proud to head an agency that has such a direct and significant impact on the lives of our fellow citizens.

Wishing you all a healthy and happy holiday season.

James W. McCracken
James W. McCracken

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The Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly (O.O.I.E) works to preserve the health, safety and welfare and to protect the rights of New Jersey residents age 60 and older who live in long-term health care facilities. The program seeks to ensure that residents receive quality care as they age. The Office is in, but is independent of, the NJ Department of the Treasury.

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OOIE Outreach focuses on Community Service



Crisis Ministry food pantry by preparing food packages for distribution to local needy families.



The OOIE Outreach Office schedules these volunteer activities not only to give back to the local community but also to increase awareness about OOIE services among the state's most vulnerable and at-risk populations.


Anticipating Governor Chris Christie's annual "Season of Service," the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly lent a hand to two major social service organizations in the Trenton area. On November 12th, Ombudsman James McCracken and staff served New Jersey residents at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. Also, on November 22nd Ombudsman staff assisted the



OOIE staff are pictured with Crisis Ministry Directors Carolyn Biondi and Mark Smith.



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A Baby for Gram

Union County Volunteer Advocate Linda Mainker has developed a highly effective and innovative way to improve the lives of nursing home residents living in memory care units: giving them lifelike dolls.

"The idea to provide the residents with dolls in aiding them to remember their early days (came) after seeing a resident holding a great grandchild," said Mainker, who has been a volunteer advocate for 15 years. "The residents have responded positively."

A Baby for Gram is a baby doll therapy program for memory care residents developed by Mainker, one of OOIE's most seasoned volunteers. Mainker also serves as a mentor to new advocates and helped to edit the revised OOIE Volunteer Advocate training manual.



Residents who are "caring" for the realistic baby dolls tend to be more focused and less agitated during routine care and their attitude towards other residents and facility staff is improved, said Mainker, adding "Our capacity for love and nurturing is an inherent basic need."

To date, the Volunteer Advocate Program has given away over 300 baby dolls in Union, Hudson, Essex and Morris Counties!

NEW JERSEY'S VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Establishing a Community Presence in
Nursing Homes Across the State

The **New Jersey Elder Ombudsman** Volunteer Advocate Program helps promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents age 60 and older who live in nursing homes.

Advocates help protect residents' rights and ensure quality of care by making regular visits to a local nursing home.

To become a volunteer advocate, please contact the Elder Ombudsman's Office at (877) 582-6995 or visit www.nj.gov/ooie.



O.O.A.E.

Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly

1-877-582-6995

Guidance. Support. Advocacy.



Advocacy & Investigation

- ✓ Protecting the health, safety, & well-being of seniors living in nursing homes & other long-term care facilities



Volunteer Advocate Program

- ✓ Establishing a regular presence at nursing homes and resolving issues as close to bedside as possible, dedicated volunteer advocates ensure that the voices of New Jersey's nursing home residents are heard.



End-of-Life Consulting

- ✓ Serving as a resource of end-of-life decisions including reviewing proposals to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining medical treatment in end-of-life situations in long-term care.

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Focus on: I Choose Home NJ

The I Choose Home NJ (ICHNJ) program, a federal program that moves willing and eligible seniors and disabled individuals out of institutions and back into home-based settings, is in full swing at the Ombudsman's Office. We have been tasked with promoting the program throughout the state, visiting every nursing home to identify possible participants, and spreading the message far and wide that "A Nursing Home (or Developmental Center) May Not Be the Only Option."

Since Spring 2013, our Outreach and Advocacy Team has identified approximately 130 individuals in nursing homes who want to move out, educated dozens of nursing facility social workers about a resident's right to receive counseling about ALL of their possible living choices, and made appropriate referrals to the Department of Human Services to transition residents home under ICHNJ. So far, more than a dozen of these individuals have moved out under I Choose Home NJ, many others are awaiting transition, and still others who were not eligible have moved to more desirable settings and/or received counseling to explore all of their living choices.

ICHNJ Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator for the southern region, Lea Hernandez, appeared on WEMG 1310 am's "Camden en Marcha/Camden on the Move" radio show on Sunday, September 15. Lea spoke to Spanish speaking listeners in the Camden area about the Ombudsman's Program, and the benefits of I Choose Home NJ and home- and community-based services.



On October 17th, Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator Nikiah Nixon educated the staff of the Mercer County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) about I Choose Home NJ and how it can benefit their clients.

As of December 2013, the ICHNJ Program has moved more than 900 individuals out of developmental centers and nursing homes and has saved the State more than \$5 million (since 2008). By 2020, the ICHNJ Team will have transitioned more than 2,200 people and saved New Jersey taxpayers more than \$35 million!

Please visit our website at www.IChooseHome.NJ.Gov to learn more about this program.

And please reach out to us at 1-855-466-3005 if you know someone living in a nursing home or developmental center who has been living there 90+ days, is/will be eligible for Medicaid, would prefer to return to the community.



On the Road with ICHNJ Outreach Program

By Jennifer Sills

"If anyone were to ask me what I want out of life I would say - the opportunity for doing something useful, for in no other way, I am convinced, can true happiness be attained". -Eleanor Roosevelt



These words are true to my heart.

As an Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator for *I Choose Home NJ*, I have the great pleasure of doing work that is useful and produces positive results for seniors living in nursing homes. *I Choose Home NJ* helps to transition people out of institutional settings – nursing homes and developmental centers – back to more independent community living with the supports and services needed to meet their health and social needs. *I Choose Home NJ* is not only great for individual participants, it is also saving NJ taxpayers millions of dollars in the process.

An average day for me starts by driving to Bergen, Hudson, Essex or Passaic County. In these counties I am visiting every nursing home, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), hospital, and any and all professional or community groups willing to hear the *I Choose Home NJ* message that “a nursing home may not be the only option.” I educate staff, residents, families, and health care professionals about the program, and search for individuals who have been living 90+ days in a facility, are Medicaid eligible, and who want to return to the community. Anyone familiar with Northeast Jersey can

imagine that my GPS is my new best friend! I have had many opportunities to “re-calculate” my way through side streets and back roads.

Arriving at any skilled nursing facility is the best part of my day. Prior to this job, I worked for 20 years as a recreation therapist in nursing homes, and it is where I am most at home. I make connections easily with residents and we form a lasting rapport. My strong sense of advocacy makes it easy for me to discuss a person’s desire to return home, and to make the necessary connections and referrals to explore *all* of their possible living options.

A resident in Hudson County recently called me to ask a question to which he already knew the answer. I asked him, “Carl, why did you *really* call me?” His reply, “I really just wanted to chat.” Carl is in the process of transitioning back to the community with the support of Medicaid’s Global Options program and *I Choose Home NJ*. His greatest wish was that placement be found for him near water as he is an avid fisherman. It is these unique traits and characteristics in the people I meet that I take to heart and feel so strongly about.

Attending community outreach events has been an eye-opening experience for me. Recently, at the Caregiver Expo at the Bergen County ADRC, I was humbled to talk to many caregivers and learn what their daily lives are like. The caregivers in this state are often the backbone to the people we are helping to move back to the community. Children, spouses and siblings are the support staff that often goes unnoticed and unpaid. One caregiver son, caring for his mother since she returned from a nursing home, held back tears as he explained that his mother “was the best mother in the world - she took care of me, now it is my turn to take care of her.” This level of commitment and emotionality is something that the *I Choose Home NJ* staff witness often. It is

moving and rewarding to help facilitate these types of resource connections and to strengthen bonds between families.

When I left work as a recreational therapist, one of the things I had to say goodbye to was twenty years of calling BINGO. However, in my first month as an ICHNJ Coordinator, I discovered that I could use my recreation skills to advance the *I Choose Home NJ* message, using Residents Rights Bingo as a platform to talk about choices that residents have, including where they want to live and how/where they want to receive their care. This is a great example of how the *I Choose Home NJ* Team is using each staff member’s strength to advance our message of deinstitutionalization. In a recent, very spirited game of BINGO, an elderly woman told me, “Well sweetheart, you get to call Bingo until you retire, then you get to *play* Bingo.” I am not making any predictions, but I have a feeling I may be “BINGO’d” out by that time...

Inglemoor Center resident Mrs. Carri Perry and Jennifer play Residents Rights Bingo. Through this fun activity, Jennifer educated residents about their rights and spoke to them about *I Choose Home NJ*.



Every day that I get into my car and travel to a new destination I know that I am given the responsibility to make a difference. I take this work and the purpose it serves seriously and with determination. The connections that I have made professionally and personally continue to be avenues of growth for me as an individual, a licensed Recreation Therapist, and most important, as an Advocate.



New Jersey's Money Follows the Person Program is

I Choose Home NJ

A Nursing Home May Not Be The Only Option

"I was so glad to get home. You're around all the things you love. Your kids can run in and out to come see you. I don't ever want to go to a nursing home. As long as I can, I will be here."

- Mary, Ocean County, moved home October 2011

I Choose Home – NJ (ICH-NJ) also known as Money Follows the Person (MFP), is a Federal program with two main goals:

- move people out of **HIGH-COST** nursing homes and developmental centers;
- re-invest Medicaid dollars saved back into **LOWER COST, HIGH QUALITY** home- and community-based services (HCBS).

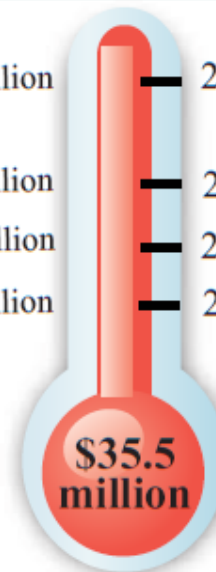
Residents who are eligible for Medicaid and have been living in a nursing home or developmental center for 90 days or more may be able to participate in *I Choose Home*.

New Jersey receives an extra 25% Medicaid reimbursement for the first year an individual successfully transitions home under this program. These savings are then reinvested in home- and community-based services, so that more people can remain at home with the assistance they need.



Total Savings to NJ Taxpayers

\$35.5 million	2020
\$20.2 million	2014
\$4.7 million	2012
\$1.4 million	2010



Contact Us:

1-855- HOME-005
(4 6 6 3)



That number is expected to exceed 2,200 by 2016.

Department of Human Services NJ
Jennifer Velez, Commissioner

State of New Jersey
Chris Christie, Governor
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor
www.IChooseHomeNJ.gov

Office of the Ombudsman
for the Institutionalized Elderly
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